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Wayside Gatherings.

New Year Resolutions.

One frequently hears it said that there is a lot of nonsense talked about New Year resolutions ; that the emotion is irrational and the resolutions are not kept. There may be some truth in the latter remark. One cannot help saying, however, that a good resolution comes from the right quarter, and there is more where this came from. And as we ring out the old and ring in the new there is no more appropriate offering we can make than a life dedicated to the unfinished ministry of Him whose birth divided time into **before** and **after.**

Is Their Life on Mars ?

" Does life exist on Mars ? Almost certainly there is vegetable life ; we have no reason to doubt it. Is there Animal life on Mars ? There probably is but it is not proven. If the physical conditions of the planet as to water, air and soil are such that vegetable life may exist the chances are strongly in favour of Animal life also . . . . . On the whole it is possible that there is advanced life on Mars and it is not impossible, in spite of the very great difficulties of a code of communication, that our elder brothers may yet flash across space the solution of many of our problems."—From " The Outline."

Christian Fundamentals.

The Bishop of Birmingham has considered it necessary to publish a volume of sermons. Apparently, Dr. Barnes has suffered very considerably from misrepresentation and from the publication of extracts from his speeches and writings. The title of his book is " Should such a faith offend ? " and it proposes to deal with the fundamental principles of the Christian faith. One has no wish to judge the book by " extracts " ; at the same time when the writer of this volume declsres that the Incarnation is the central fact of Christianity one feels this to be strange reading when placed alongside the parable of the Good Samaritan. One is more ready to agree with the statement of another writer that the fundamental thing for christians is not the **Incarnation,** but **the imitation** of Christ.

If Love Abounds.

Referring to the present situation in organised church life, the Rev. F. H. Ballard writes : " The situation is not one to be feared—unless, indeed, we fail in Christian charity. Absolute argeement will never be achieved while we differ as we do in temperament and training . . . differences do not divide if love abounds ; they increase the interest. What we should plead for, then, is not uniformity of belief and not unworthy compromise ; but mutual forbearance and Christian tolerance. What we need to cultivate is that intellectual magnanimity which suffereth long and is kind ; that love which seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, taketh no account of evil. The lack of that is the greatest indictment of the Church."

Seeing and Tasting.

In a weekly paper which has just reached me I notice that a United Methodist minister is preaching a series of sermons on " Peeps into Hell." The reverend gentleman's subject advertised in this particular issue is : Peeps into Hell, via Dante. Then follows the title of an Anthem to be sung by the choir : " O Taste and See." A. W.

New Year's Messages.

By Rev. Alexander Gordon, M.A.

The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland, dates from 1910 ; but there is a long history behind it, running up towards the beginning of the seventeenth century. Our General Synod has accordingly deputed the present writer to draw up a Manual detailing the Origin and History of our Church, and this has now been done. On the Synod, as our representative body, the thoughts and feelings of our people must converge, that so there may be a healthy common life throughout our entire membership. All church courts are open, and to this, our supreme church court, the attendance of every member is invited. The deliberations of its constituent ministers and elders are no private business ; the whole Church is interested in them. Thus the meetings of Synod should be well known and thought of, beforehand, and preparation made for them. Selection of a congregation's Elder is an important part of a congregation's duty, and the obligation of attendance is a duty which the appointed Elder owes, both to his own congregation and to the Church at large. Failure of a full representation means a loss of the links which should bind the body together as a going concern, a working community. No justice is done to the Synod, or to the congregations composing it, if it is cramped amid other engagements, deprived of the full play of speech, and hurried to a close by dwindling attendance. Such things have happened ; but we are entering a New Year, with new hopes and, please God, with a heart for new efforts.

A. G.

R. M. Laird.

You very kindly asked me for a word of exhortation suitable for the New Year. The best message I can send you is an attempt to awaken the conscience of our people with respect to the prevalent vice of betting and gambling. It is difficult to distinguish between the two, because both arise from the same source, namely, greed for money for which no adequate return is made. From evidence collected by ministers of religion, municipal authorities, the police and governors of prisons we gather that betting and gambling have enormously increased of late years. The number of professional book-makers in Great Britain, the Free State and Northern Ireland is estimated at 20,000. The upper classes are not the only ones addicted to this vice, but every class down to the lowest slum dwellers are so infected. The children of the poorer classes are reared in a home atmosphere where the talk is mostly of betting and gambling. Boys of about 12 years of age have been known to make " a book " in school where they bet with other small boys for pence and half-pence—this of course, being unknown to the Schoolmaster. " The Football Coupon " is rife among the boys and is encouraged at home. Parents do not regard this as harmful because the cost amounts only to the price of the newspaper. There is also the new form of gambling associated with Greyhound Racing which to my mind is one of the worst forms of the gambling vice. When our Lord Mayor and other prominent citizens attend a Greyhound meeting our young people are apt to imagine that it is a respectable and harmless indulgence and this encourages them to attend at " Celtic Park," and to put money on the dogs.

The vice of betting and gambling has only one end, namely, financial ruin, the Workhouse or the Asylum. Now, Mr. Editor, what are we a Christian Church, going to do in the matter. Are we going to deal squarely with this devastating vice ? It should be faithfully denounced from every one of our pulpits, and a great indignation meeting arranged, and resolutions passed calling on our Government to pass a bill to make Greyhound Race Meetings illegal. This social evil should have a prominent place in Sunday School teaching. Every teacher should be provided with cards detailing the harm done in our midst by betting and gambling, and be asked to have a serious talk with his class to inspire them with horror of the demoralising habit.

Rev. G. J. Slipper.

Dear Mr. Editor,

I gladly avail myself of the invitation extended to me to join in sending my heartiest greetings to the readers of the Magazine, coupled with my sincere wish that the New Year may prove both happy and prosperous for all.

The New Year is a challenge to new endeavour, and may this be a year of real endeavour in our Church generally, that its progress may be ensured, and a new spirit of fellowship created. The recent successful

mission conducted by the Rev. C. W. Townsend has evoked an awakening in our midst, which augurs well for the future, if our people are not allowed to lapse back into indifference. Opportunities are opening up for the promulgation of our liberal faith, and if we do not take advantage of them it must be to our shame. Added to our new endeavours, let there be a new spirit also. The sense of comradeship in a great cause. If every member of our group of Churches could be constrained to realise his or her responsibility it would be all to the good. Inheritors as we are of a glorious heritage of freedom and liberty we should be proud to hold it sacred, and to lend a hand in keeping it so. Whatever other Churches may be thinking, let us not be content to live upon pas' glories, but rather to help maintain our own standard of faith.

This is our duty, let us be faithful and loyal, and may the Spiri of the Lord God revive us and bless us, and the example of Jesus Christ guide us so that whilst our old men dream dreams, our young men may see visions and follow the gleam.

Miss Praeger.

" Jog on, jog on, the foot-path way,
And merrily hent the stile-a :
A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a."

I used to meet her all one winter on the long hill on the road that runs east from the village ; that long, long hill that catches the full blast of the west wind in a land where the wind is west the greater part of the year. She came up the hill as I went down it. As I rounded the bend at the top I generally saw her desolate little figure somewhere between me and the corresponding bend half a mile away, where the road turns to run level to the little town. Always she carried the same little tin can,—blackened by many fires, and the same mysteriously bulgy something tied up in an old red handkerchief. " It's me Da's breakfas', " she told me later on.

She was very small, she did not look more than six or seven, and very thinly clad. Her little peaked face was white, and the little nose in the middle of it was red. It made me think of a pink sea-anemone sitting on a white pebble.

All this I saw, yet all this was blotted out by the extraordinary brightness of the smile that flashed into her face at my word of greeting.

Of course we got acquainted. Two strugglers on a lonely road through the wild weather of December and January do not meet daily without a growing interest, and even sense of ownership, in each other. I found she was one of an innumerable family, with a helpless mother who spent much of her time lying in bed reading romances, which stimulated her fancy when naming her superabundant offspring.

When my particular friend was born, and was taken to the old priest to be christened, he was told that the babys' name was to be Laura Augusta. " Nonsense," said the good father. " I will call the poor child no such name. This is St. Bridget's Day, and I will call her Bridget."

All through that wild winter the little figure toiled up the long hill. Rain, mud, storm or snow, and no effect on the cheery face of Bridget. " And how are you to-day ? " I would gasp, as the wind tore at my wraps and seemed to whistle through my very marrow. " A'm rightly ! " came invariably the prompt answer, with an even wider grin under the dilapidated woollen remnant that she called a cap.

Time passed. The family left our neighbourhood, and I lost track of Bridget. But I still can see the plucky little scrap toiling up the long hill with her burden, with her little white face, her little red nose, and her radiant smile ; and hear her brave little voice answering " A'm rightly ! "

May we all face our wintry weather with a like courage !

S. R. P.

Notes of the Month.

The Anglican Prayer Book.

From Monday, December 12th to Thursday, December 15th, the Houses of Parliament at Westminster were engaged in discussing the New Prayer Book. It was anticipated that it would receive the sanction of both houses, even though with a narrow majority ; but the prediction proved the contrary. The struggle was expected to be a close one in the House of Lords, but resulted in a disappointment to the opponents of the measure as it was carried after a three days' debate by the substantial majority of 153. The House of Commons relegated one day's discussion to the measure, the speeches on both sides being characterised by a high level of eloquence. In the Commons the speakers against the measure appear to have swayed doubtful voters on their side with

the result that the measure was rejected by a majority of 33. While the Houses of Parliament had no power to amend or to alter the measure in any particular, they, if they so decided, could reject the measure and so prevent it from being presented to the King for his assent. The matter in dispute was chiefly a domestic concern of the Church of England, but being a Church by law established it required the consent of Parliament before it could become the law of the Church. The interests of other religious denominations are concerned in a minor degree. Nonconformists of all shades of opinion are naturally desirous of maintaining the protestant character of English religion, while Roman Catholics have stood aloof deeming the question to be a matter in which they are not specially concerned. The controversy has centred chiefly on matters of discipline in the Church and the forms of worship to be allowed, and this feature was developed to an unprecedented extent, and if the three days' discussion in the House of Lords focussed attention on discipline and matters in dispute between Protestants and Anglo-Catholics it will induce a large number of people to think hard on such questions and endeavour to come to a decided opinion The discussion in the Commons was maintained at a high level of excellence. The earnest eloquence of the champions of the Evangelical party evidently decided some members to vote against the measure. To Non-Conformists it is of importance mostly in connection with the trend to disestablishment which is apparently gradually gaining ground among live and earnest Churchmen. To Non-Subscribing Christians,—of whom there are many more than are numbered among our churches,—the questions in dispute are not of first class importance in as much as Non-Subscription to dogmatic tests is a fundamental article of our faith. The crisis in the Anglican Church is interesting to us on account of the laborious endeavours in the Established Church to bring its doctrines and usages into accord with the trend of modern times. The Archbishop of Canterbury undoubtedly made a great point when he said the Church was asking for a Book which belonged, not to 1662, but to 1927. In so far as the Archbishop's wish is to keep in touch with advancing knowledge and with modern ideas we wish him and those with him every success in their endeavours.

Our Household of Faith.

When a great historic Church is making strenuous efforts to keep abreast of the needs of the times in matters of faith and discipline, our church also has grave need of being roused from lethargy, to be true to the principles of its foundation, to carry out the teaching it has imbibed in practical exemplification of religion emancipated from dogmatism and is free to encourage the religion of the spirit unhampered by hoary restrictions.

The New Year's message we are privileged to lay before our readers this month, coming as it does from a veteran leader of our household of faith, the Rev. Alexander Gordon, M.A., must necessarily appeal to all members of our Churches who are anxious for the spread of the principles they implicitly believe in. The message, it will be observed, is brief and to the point. It concentrates on first things first. It inculcates loyalty and attention to Church discipline apart from which our Church Courts are mere shells without life-giving sustenance. Our principles call for a living faith in them, and this faith results in enthusiastic conviction capable of removing mountains of difficulties and indifference. At the beginning of a New Year may we not appeal to Church members to lay aside a prevalent disposition to regard Church Courts as of no immediate concern of theirs. As our veteran leader implies ours is not a true Church unless its elders and leaders are alive to their opportunities and privileges. It may be that lay members have some right to expect more vigorous encouragement and leadership from their preaching elders ; and it is equally open for ministers to have the right to expect more consistent and sustaining support from lay members who are in a position to gratify their wish. As a matter of fact there is not, when we are true to the genius of our Church, any real difference between ministers and laymen. We are, regarded from the point of view of the priesthood, all laymen. There are no priests among us, and, if any there be, they have strayed very far from their true connection. It is evident that our members, both ministerial and lay should remember the Catechism definition of the Church, namely, that " the Church of Jesus Christ, or the whole body of Christ, is the whole number of those who believe in him." If that is so, then the more impressed our membership generally becomes of " the wholeness " of our Church the more vigorous our Church

membership will be. The Church Courts over which the Synod is the final authority are capable of including and fostering all activities likely to benefit the Christian Church. We can hardly be said to be true to the principles of Non-Subscribing Presbyterianism when we resort to Congregational autonomy or import from outside methods of discipline which have the effect of weakening the activities of our Church Courts which are the executive arm of " the whole body of Christ " in our midst. We must recognise that we are a small body still though many others believe as we do, and require all the loyalty and discipline which we can muster. Our venerated leader has prepared a manual detailing the origin and history of our Church. We trust that it will soon be published. It will refresh our whole body and will be a most welcome addition to the means of instruction available in our Sunday Schools. Ministers sometimes feel depressed to find that representative elders appear to under value or, at least, to ignore our Church Courts ; and elders who diligently attend to Church business may be disappointed that ministers are remiss themselves and not more aggressive in insisting on lay representatives doing their part. Be that as it may, in wishing all Church members a Happy New Year, we look forward during the coming year with hope and confidence to a recrudescence of interest in our Church Courts and consequently of renewed life and discipline throughout the whole connection over which Synod has jurisdiction.

The Gospel of Happiness.

" A Happy New Year ! " That is the old familiar salutation. The New Year opens with the wish for Happiness, and we are still in the octave of the festival of Christmas, with its associations of the Star shining overhead, the birth of the Christ-child, the Holy Family, the Wise Men of the East, the Shepherds, and the Angels with their song of Glory and of Peace and Good Will, which makes of every Sacrament a continuous festival of Christmas. Whatever the truth underlying all this symbolism, the reality was far more glorious than any shadow of it, conveyed in legend or story no matter how true. " The things done in the Mount," are always infinitely more glorious than any form, ceremonial, representation, history or allegory which is the " Shadow of things done in the Mount," a term which we find in ancient Egypt, in " Hermes Trismegistus," the subject of Longfellow's last poem, the " Sermon in the Mount of Hermes the Thrice Greatest to his son Tat," the Mount of Initiation. Two lines of tradition still remain in the Western World of the Egyptian Mysteries. One is in Catholic ceremonial and the other in Masonry, and the one is complementary to the other, the roots of ritual in Church and Masonry are the same. " The Mystery which is beyond the world, that by which all things exist, it is all evolution and all involution ; because of it all mysteries exist and all their regions," says the Gnostic Gospel, the Pistis Sophia. What trouble the Church would have been saved. if those words had been in the Sacred Canon, The World-process with its descent of spirit into matter, outlined in the opening verses of St. John's Gospel, what does it all work out to, in the end ? Increasing capacity for happiness. The Sermon on the Mount opens with Happy, Happy, Happy, repeated in each of the Beatitudes. The Gospel is the Gospel of Happiness. We have said " Be good and you will be Happy," but how about " Be happy and you will be good ? "

ULLIN.

Temperance Notes.

In 1926 Britain faced the greatest industrial crisis in history.

It was really part of the re-action which was bound to follow the European war, but unfortunately, during the war period working people lost their heads and lived in a fool's paradise.

They thought they were in for a period of unbounded prosperity, but alas, they awoke too late to the fact that a mistake had happened.

The severities of the mining problem would have been eased or better met had there been greater store set upon education, sobriety and intelligent action, but when large numbers of men were doped with liquor, it was like speaking to stone walls when addressing them on re-construction.

G. B. Shaw has said " Drink is the working man's chloroform," and he rightly described it.

Men are slowly learning that the world is not ruled by a set of simple issues. The historic contest for power is being fought out on newer levels, but every new tendency is associated with the standard of life. It is becoming an accepted idea that the stand-

ard of life should have a close relationship to the economic development of the nation, and the best thinkers in the temperance movement desire to see the maintenance of a high standard. They naturally leave trade unionists and others to do their own work in their own way, to build up their own standards, but they urge that it is monstrous to build with one hand and knock down with the other.

Temperance reformers believe that the spending of wages should not foster the destruction of wealth and economic values, on the contrary they think wages should be so spent as to secure an equivalent for all expenditure, and they avow that money spent upon liquor not only destroys wealth, but even promotes the prosperity of sweat shops. Expenditure upon liquors does not and cannot foster trade, but it impoverishes ind viduals, families and communities, above all, it challenges the continuity of the prevailing standard of life and breaks with it at many points.

If all who are concerned with the standard of life being maintained would wash their hands of the liquor business a great advance would be made in social comfort. The liquor business thrives upon a debased standard of life among working people, and between trade unionists and the liquor business there should be no truce.

Abstinence will not cure all our economic ills, but it will cure all the poverty which drink creates, and men who desire the elimination of poverty should not rest until drink caused poverty no longer existed. Abstinence will speed the arrival of our ideals because it will make conditions of life and character through which these ideals may arrive. Thus every advance toward sobriety will pave the way for better days, and enable our people to enjoy those days when they come. Meanwhile the Church is anxious to see a development of healthy desires among the masses of men, because healthy desires precede a healthy standard of life. A.C.S.

The Discovery of God.

Rev. C. W. Townsend.

(Continued.)

Now we liberal Christians are really second to none in our loyalty to Jesus Christ, and this loyalty in a former generation expressed itself in a great idea—the Christlikeness of God. The contribution of Liberal Christianity in the generation to which most of us belong has expressed itself in an equally great idea—Jesus Christ being one of ourselves, is an epitome and a prophecy of the possibilities of human nature in the moral sphere. May we not say that the contribution of the generation of Liberal Christianity, now in process of becoming, is this correlated idea—that the world of human society in all the ramifications of its institutional and national and international modes of expression is capable of becoming the very Temple of the Eternal, wherein he may be served and worshipped and adored, and in which service and worship and adoration, mankind, past, present, and to come, may enter upon Eternal Life? That is the ideal, high enough and deep enough to meet the need of man's quest ever pursued from the dawn of consciousness until now. I know it sounds "high-falutin'" in the extreme, but is it impossible? The reply of the Real Man is mighty heartening as he answers that question in a thundering negative! This conception constitute, the essence of the vital religion of to-day. this is the essential Christianity of our age.

But after all it is nothing new. Amiel said as much long since in one crisp sentence:—"What is specific in Christianity is Jesus; the religious consciousness of Jesus." And long, long before Amiel's time the great voices in heaven were singing in grand prophetic chorus: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever." There is a fine answer to the "impossibilists" on this issue in William Blake's prophetical work, 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.' William Blake asked Isaiah: "Does a firm persuasion that a thing is make it so?" Isaiah replied: "All poets believe that it does, and in ages of imagination this firm persuasion removed mountains." There are words of a popular scientist of to-day which blend in perfect harmony with this conception of the eighteenth century artist, poet and mystic. Sir Oliver Lodge writes:

> "I doubt if it is given to man to think out a clear and consistent system higher and nobler than the real Truth. Our highest thoughts are likely to be nearest to reality; they must be stages in the direction of truth, else they could not have come to us and been recognised as highest."

The Beatific Vision of the medievalist and the Golden Age of the modernist,

after all, may not be two visions distinct and separate, but one and indissoluble

"Dreamer of Dreams," we take the taunt with gladness,
Knowing that God beyond the years you see,
Has wrought the dreams that count with you for madness,
Into the substance of the world to be."

This vision which regards the human soul as a fount of creative power and human society as the Temple of God, is a product, not of freakish fantasy, but of will power. It is an emergence into consciousness of an integral and fundamental part of our human nature. It is the divinity of our humanity. But the godlike in us only achieves sovereignity by our deliberate choice and determination. There is no willy-nilly process of development here. The nineteenth century might dreamily assent to a frame of mind which "needs must love the highest when we see it," but there is no "needs must" for the twentieth century. We are too broad awake and realistic to trust in such a broken reed.

Progress, development, evolution has become for us a matter of deliberate consciousness. The men and women of the present age are not day-dreamers, but determinists of the new order; that is to say, *we* do the determining.

True, we may use Tennyson's words for our purpose, but with a different meaning from the one he intended. "We needs must love the highest when we see it," *or sink back nearer to the rudimentary and primitive elements of life.* We must *will* the ideal and the vision if it is ever to become actual and real. The ideal and the real is a false antithesis. They are not mutual contradictories. They are twin souls which may be eternally wedded by goodwill and vision. If we *will* we can achieve anything that heart desires. The very act of willing produces clarity in the vision, until it becomes crystal clear and sharply defined; and it is for lack of such vision that the people perish. "This is Life Eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," and this knowledge is possible to every one of us, it is latent in every human soul. In the heart of every person there is a mystic angel, sleeping, or astir, or wide awake, and without that mystic presence we should be less than human. The mystic element in human nature is the guarantee and proof that we are truly human and divine. "As every man discovers his Real Man, he discovers God . . . . he unveils another letter in God's name and ensures to humanity the progressive revelation of God." For the realisation of the vision of the Kingdom of Heaven, everything depends on the discovery of the Real Man in every man. The country of heart's desire, the fields of greater service and productivity and self-realisation, lie open to the bearers of the passports of the spirit. "The Real Man Imagination, Inspiration, these are the Eternal things wherein life and salvation consist"; it is the realisation of this truth, which constitutes our deepest modern consciousness.

We have beheld the vision as from afar in these modern times, but have we the courage to follow on to know the Lord?

Glory about thee, without thee, and thou fulfillest thy doom
Making him broken gleams, and a stifled splendour and gloom.
Speak to him thou for he hears and Spirit with spirit can meet,
Closer is he than breathing and nearer than hands and feet.
And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see,
But if we could see and hear, this vision—were it not he?

Yes, it is *he*. But let us not be depressed with this plaintive note that "the ear of man cannot hear, and eye of man cannot see"; Man can hear and see if man *will*.

Emerson says: "The way of life is wonderful; it is by abandonment."

Believe me, this readiness to abandon ourselves without reserve to the highest we have yet glimpsed is the unmistakable characteristic of the regenerate soul of man. It is this element in religious life which constitutes all the difference in the world between a mere technique of religion and a joyfully triumphant expression of religion.

Abandonment is not the way of slavish imitation, but the way of transformation; the way of emancipation for all the powers of personality. When the will freely and gladly chooses the highest, then the conscience becomes illumined and the personality bestirs itself in characteristic and abundant growth and development.

These are the marks of the mystically abandoned — imagination, inspiration, transmutted passion, audacity in service, fellowship with everyman. Each in its natural and charcateristic mode of expressionwill mark the development of the renewed and regenerate personality and will

lead on towards the fulfilment of Christ's heart's desire : " That they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee."

How true to life's deepest instincts is that prayer of the Master's !

" Religion, philosophy, knowledge, culture, art, are only good and great as they lead to a vaster fellowship.

There shall come from out this noise of strife and groaning,
A broader and a juster brothergood,
A deep equality of aim, postponing
All selfish seeking to the general good :
There shall come a time when each shall bto another
Be as Christ would have him, brother unto brother.

There shall come from Cout this noise of strife and groaning,
A broader and a juster brotherhood,
A deep equality of aim, postponing
All selfish seeking to the general good :
There shall come a time when each shall to another
Be as Christ would have him, brother unto brother.

That is *the only way* that leads to the Eternal Life, which is " but a means unto an end ; that end, beginning, mean, and end to all things—God."

Lectures for S. S. Teachers.

The Rev. A. Whitford, Convener of the Sunday School Committee writes to say that a series of Lectures are being arranged in Mountpottinger Schoolroom and will begin on the first Thursday in January. The Lectures are intended primarily for teachers in our Sunday Schools, but members of our congregations will be at liberty to take advantage of the series. There will be 8 Lectures delivered fortnightly by Mr. J. Dorward of Queen's University. The Convener is having circulars printed setting out the full programme of subjects.

Bishop and a Book.

Impatience with an Impatient Parson.

" He has undertaken a work for which he is intellectually incompetent," says the Bishop of Gloucester, critisicing the Rev. H. R. L. Sheppard's book. " The Impatience of a Parson," in his Diocesan Magazine.

" I have a great regard for him, and I do not wish to be too severe in my criticism. His book is very unjust, very unbalanced, teems with inconsistencies, and is not likely to do any good.

" I do not believe in the immense superiority of young people. They have been educated with little real discipline, and have not been taught to do what is irksome. The fact that they have no use for institutional religion does not in the least necessarily reflect upon the church life of the present day.

" Mr Sheppard tells us that the Christian Church is the one body that never revises its teachings. That is entirely untrue. Every year come out wise and thoughtful books battling with the problem of truth and reality. Since the war we have had Dr. Rashgall's Brampton lecture, Dr. Williams' Brampton lecture, Dr. Rawlinson's Brampton lecture, Canon Street's book, and now a book on sacraments by Dr. Quick.

" All these books are candid and sincere and their teaching gradually permeates the Church of England. I doubt if Mr. Sheppard could understand these books if he attempted to read them."

Truth Moveth On.

Sermon by Rev. C. J. STREET, M.A., LL.B.

" Your brethren that cast ye out for My name's sake said, Let the Lord be glorified ! But He shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed."—Isa. 66 : 5.

If this prophecy had been made about the Unitarian Faith, we should feel that it had been realised to-day. Our fathers were cast out of the temple because they refused to conform to ritual and creed which to them rang false, and conflicted with the inward call of the soul ; but now the creeds are crashing as the minds of men are opening out to the inexhaustible riches of divine truth, and man is asserting his prerogative of private judgment in matters of religion, for which indeed a brave attempt was made at the time of the Reformation, only to be quelled by the same evil spirit of conformity against which it had rebelled. Only in this generation has the real spirit of the Reformation emerged, to claim its own and enter into its inheritance.

There can be no question that we are on the eve of startling developments in the theological and ecclesiastical world, as we have already observed in the moral one. The rapid progress of theological change within the last two decades is a part of the healthy spirit of challenge to established forms and assumptions, which have ruled

into pattern too long the beliefs and practices of the generality of men. The days of undisputed authority are vanishing—never, I hope, to return; for man is becoming increasingly conscious of his own worth, and of the definite individual part which he is expected to play in forming decisions and taking risks.

While this is all to the good, and greatly to be welcomed, undoubtedly the new spirit at work has its inconveniences. Corporate life is less placid when the units are too much alive. It is so much easier to work according to rule laid down by somebody else beforehand; it is irksome to be obliged to think for oneself and take a personal responsibility. It is not only that the restive spirit has to take this trouble on its own part, but its doing so involves discomfort for others who desire nothing so much as not to be disturbed.

Even more—the recoil from undue restraint is apt to express itself, as it is doing most apparently to-day, in open defiance of decorum and delicacies, and restraints, which had become as second nature by long-established acceptance, so that even the freest of spirits are apt to be dismayed, and not a little disgusted, at the abuse of freedom by those who had not previously been accustomed to use it at all. Probably most of us share in this feeling about some of the reactions which characterise this transition age.

But, for all that, there is no real cause for deep distress, much less for despair about the future. We are witnessing a remarkable assertion of the divine right of the human spirit to take responsibility for its own development. It has much to learn, and it will make many mistakes, which will hurt both itself and its associates in the process; but it is a **necessary** process, and out of it good will come in the end. In a God-created and permeated world, human life, which is its choicest product, can be trusted to work out its own salvation in the long run. From divine origins nothing but divine issues can be forthcoming. The next generation will benefit from the revolt of the present one.

In the religious world all this movement, so characteristic of our times, is extraordinary active. Too long have men been content with parrot-like repetitions of other men's creeds, forgetting that such creeds were the outcome of sincere and anxious thought, if sometimes of mistaken judgment on the part of those who framed them, and that quite as much careful consideration ought to go towards the acceptance of them if they are to be accepted at all. The tame submission of unused intellects to the dicta of stronger men is the establishment of laziness in a realm of divine power intended for fullest and freest exercise. There is doubtless much comfort in conformity, but it is undignified and unworthy of our high calling. So that we may thank God for a stern breaking up of theological complacency, and an enforced reconsideration of the whole problem of Man's relationship to God, to his Fellowman, and to Truth as a whole, which becomes necessary when it is perceived that the foundations are tumbling down.

There are two very marked and diverse movements at work in the theological sphere at the present time—movements which have gathered impetus in geometrical progression during the last few years. On the one hand, there is an alarming recrudescence of Superstition, shown in the trend towards Roman Catholicism via the Anglo-Catholic route, in a frenzied recourse to spiritists and soothsayers, pseudo-scientists and physical adventurers in the hope of obtaining some sort of mental rest, and in the main reliance on ornate ritual and ceremonial observances and other outward shows of things, as if they could bring men's souls nearer to the Ultimate Realities. It is a vain and pitiful quest, and betrays a lack of self-confidence and of appreciation of the sacred trust reposed by God in one's own personality. This deplorable waste of fine power we need not dwell upon now, except as a warning, viz., that we must not take it too muWh for granted, as I fear Re have done, that all things are shaping well in the best of worlds, and that there is no need for us to bestir ourselves about awakening the intelligence of those who are drifting along the current of popular delusions.

The other significant movement so active in the theological world to-day is very different, and much more commendable and encouraging. It is the recoil of a virile intelligence against the smug acceptance of theories and beliefs which could only have originated in an age of very limited knowledge and ill-understood values—an age which has been completely outgrown, though its speculations and dogmatisms remain to tie the hands of the present and keep its mind in fetters. The same obtains in the moral realm, which, if it is to be worth anything at all for men and women of the present day, must widen its perception

and take a large view of human responsibilities in the light of the call for service in an ordered world. The old standards were humiliatingly low, and need to be raised as obligations emerge. Conditions are so utterly changed in modern times that readjustment is absolutely necessary for self-respect.

The extraordinary revelations made by scientific research have brought us all into a new world, not known to our forefathers. They have displayed before our eyes the wonders of a mightier universe that had ever been conceived by the mind of man. They have made plain to us the marvellous unity which binds all natural forces together, confirming indeed the best dreams of the theologians whose reverent homage was paid to the One and Only God, but enlarging immeasureably the sphere of His operations.

Such things cannot be without making great changes in man's apprehension of the problems which beset his understanding. He feels that he must take his fitting place in relation to established facts. First, he becomes conscious of his very humble origin—not springing full-grown and alert, with complete moral equipment, into dominant life in the world—but evolved by elementary processes through aeons of time, and slowly climbing from the amoeba through innumerable animal stages until self-consciousness led the way to self-development and the birth of a soul, with all its intellectual and moral and religious powers still to be brought into exercise. And why not such lowly origin? See what marvel is this slow growth and development to so great an end. Is this not a plain indication of the mighty promise still held in reserve for future ages.

Then, man, is learning his relative insignificance in this mighty cosmos. It is good for his pride to be pricked by remorseless fact. The utter folly of a homocentric theory of the universe becomes increasingly apparent to him as his grasp of truth grows firmer. How could he ever have thought that all things were to be measured and weighed in terms of human life? The other animals have a life-value of their own, evidently, without regard to their relation to him. The trees and the flowers flourish and bloom as an end in themselves, not merely to give him objects to use and admire. Let him take a more modest place in the scheme of things, and try to justify his existence without calling on all the rest of animate and inanimate creation to bow down before him, and serve his ends.

And yet, the more man learns about himself and his unique place in the cosmic plan, the more wonderful does his own power of apprehension appear. "O God, I think Thy thoughts after Thee," is not only the cry of an awe-smitten Leibnitz, it is the unuttered thought of the man of merely average attainments who is blessed with some lucidity of perception. What wonder is this—that man should understand the thought of God at all; that he should even think about God for one fleeting moment? "In apprehension, how like a God" indeed? Only one who had something akin to God in himself could for a moment understand a fraction of the thought of God. These Laws of Nature, what are they but the customary methods of Divine working; and how could the mind of man comprehend them to any extent unless it was attuned to the Infinite Mind?

So that, emerging from his humility and based upon it, there comes a comforting and stimulating sense of the Divine Sonship of man. His nature is too rich a treasure for Providence to waste. Even the simple individual, with a mind so richly stored, or a faculty so splendidly developed, or a moral sense so sensitive and responsive to the call of a common humanity, or a soul so steeped in the Divine Love—how could it be allowed by the Infinite Energiser, who makes use of every tiniest force to serve His great purposes, to perish as though it had never been? Does it not seem reasonable to believe in its continuity?

Hence, we look at the ferment in the religious world to-day without alarm indeed, rather with great satisfaction and hopefulness. This is the way our fathers went before us, and we entered into a rich hertiage that thereby they bequeathed to us. We too, if there is any freshness about our faith, have had to face the new facts ourselves as they emerged and readjust our doctrines and theories of truth accordingly. Only good can come out of earnest search for truth, even though mistakes must necessarily be made sometimes in the process. The mistakes will pass: the truth will prevail.

And have not we of the Unitarian Faith much to delight and encourage us in what we hear and read and see in the religious world around us? Here is Bishop Gore, frankly accepting all the results of modern Biblical Criticism, applied to the New Testament as well as to the Old, telling a Mayfair con-

gregation that "we merely delay the adjustment of Christianity to the new world of ideas by going on murdering and perplexing the minds of our children, instead of being frank."

"It is no good playing the Canute. You must have the courage frankly to accept the indisputable verdicts of historical science. You must have the courage of truth, and not be for ever impeding the clearing up of the issue by feeble lamentations and half-hearted harkings behind."

"Faith stands, and we must stand by accepting, and not repudiating, the light." (At Grosvenor Chapel, Mayfair, 18th Sept., 1927).

Here is Jerome K. Jerome, brought up in the faith of Trinitarian Orthodoxy, giving in his recently published autobiography a last message to the world, which is nothing less than an exposition of Unitarianism to which he found his way by painful process.

Here is "Dick Sheppard," as he is affectionately called, giving vent in plain and unmeasured words to the "Impatience of a Parson," and even inviting his ecclesiastical superiors to say whether, holding such advanced and unconventional opinions of Christian Truth, he has a right to remain in the Established Church. Bold Bishop Barnes has not gone so far as that yet! And what are the kind of things which the late Vicar of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, whom everyone delights to honour and admire, feels such a burning impulse to utter to the world, and more particularly in appeal to his own Church? "I am compelled" he says at the outset, "with the greatest reluctance, to believe that the Churches have corporately so misunderstood the message of their Founder, and so mishandled and mislaid his values—the values of his Father-God—that what survives and does duty nowadays, through the Churches, as Christianity is a caricature of what Christ intended.

The Churches need much more than patchwork repair. "There never was a moment in history more urgently in need of the saving power of a large and fearless religion."

"The first duty for those of us who profess and call ourselves Christians and Church people is to re-think our religion in terms of Jesus Christ."

"The Christian creed can only vindicate itself by the production of Christian character." The religion of Christ "is not a religion of words, but of actions."

"Is it conceivable that Christ could be orthodox within any Church to-day, or that He could sit at our ecclesiastical gatherings and enter with sympathy into most of the problems which we so love to debate? I fear that if our Lord were to come again, He would be compelled to acknowledge that Institutional Religion had corrected many of his values and forgotten many besides. It is doubtful who would be the more surprised: He at our values or we at His."

"If the Church is ready to accept and not merely to acclaim the belief (that God is the Ideal and Perfect Father) it must obviously rewrite much of its literature and restate a good many of its present beliefs."

"Time upon time in its Prayer-book there are references to a God who can in no wise be identified with the Father of Jesus Christ."

"A hell of eternal punishment is not compatible with Christianity." "As things are to-day, any man who is willing to accept credal statements, even though he may not have given them five minutes thought, is acceptable; but an honest and thoughtful man, who has gone into the depths in his search for a living faith and has come out believing in Christ, but unable to believe some theological amplifications about Him, is unfit, officially at least, for full membership in the Catholic Church."

And here is Bishop Barnes, a bold protagonist, of whom the bigots may well be afraid, making a timely and necessary attack upon the superstitions associated with the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in a large section of the nation's Church—an attack mild in the extreme compared with that which we love and honour Wickliffe for making. But that is small in significance as compared with his complete acceptance of the findings of science, and his demand that the Church's theology must adjust itself to established facts. That is splendid, and just what hosts of thinking men and women have long been feeling.

(To be Continued.)

When Nature wants to drill a man
And thrill a man,
And skill a man,
And Nature wants to mould a man
To play the noblest part;
When she yearns with all her heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall praise—
Watch her method, watch her ways!

From American Exchange.

Address by Dean Inge.

[The following points from an address by Dean Inge to the Oxford Luncheon Club, on "Breed and National Tradition," may be interesting to our readers.]

"There is a great danger that the racial type in this country will deteriorate owing to the differentiation of the birth-rate of different classes. At the present time the best of the working classes is being taken into the professional classes, and then it becomes sterile. In fact, we are taking away the cream of each generation and throwing it away. We cannot afford to continue doing that with impunity.

"At the present time the highest birth-rate is among the feeble-minded women, who have an average of seven or eight children.

"At the other end of the scale are the doctors, among whom the birth-rate is lowest. Next come ministers of religion.

"There is one important factor which is probably a partial explanation. Young men in the professions are grossly underpaid and old men, like myself, over-paid.

"It is with us that the remedy must lie, for we shall get no help from the politicians. They realise that the unborn have no vote.

"Critics of eugenics who say that we want to establish the methods of the stud farm are simply prejudiced.'"

Reports.

The Women's League.—First House Branch. A meeting of above falling due during his visit to Belfast, the Rev. C. W. Townsend very kindly consented to give an address. Members of all the District branches were invited and in spite of most inclement weather there was a crowded attendance. Tea was served from 3-30 till 4, when the meeting began with prayer, followed by the reading of the "Declaration of the Scriptural Principles of Unitarian Christians." The President then in a few words introduced the speaker, who taking for his text 2 chapters from the "The Science of Power," by B. Kidd, gave an eloquent address on "The Mind of Woman, and the Future of Civilization." He indicated the immense influence of woman from the beginning of Time—even when unconsciously exercised—till the present day, when, according to Kidd it was in the power of woman to alter the whole condition of civilization in one generation. The lecturer pointed out the necessity of woman realizing her great responsibility for the future, and fitting herself for it. Questions were invited, and Mrs. Davies (Comber), Mrs. Jackson (Mountpottinger) and others took part in the discussion that followed. A very hearty vote of thanks and appreciation was proposed by Miss Eileen Andrews (President of the District), seconded by Miss Porter and enthusiastically passed.

Women's League, Comber.—The Comber Branch of the Women's League held its Third Annual United Party on Monday, December 5th. Invitations were sent to the branches which comprise the district League, but Larne were unable to accept. There were between 120 and 130 people present and the evening's entertainment was voted most successful. After a delightful tea, which was contributed by the members of the Comber branch, a jolly programme was thoroughly enjoyed. Beautiful singing was rendered by Mrs. Frank M'Roberts, Miss Taggart and Miss J. Adams. Charades by the younger members of the Comber branch and a play entitled "Miss Belinda's Burglar," acted by Misses Adams, Frame, Montgomery and S. Stewart; and games for young and old made up a delightful programme. Miss Armstrong of First Church voiced the thanks of that branch to the Comber branch for its hospitality, this was seconded by Mrs. E. R. Jackson, representing both the Mission and Mountpottinger Women's League. Mrs. Glynne Davies presented prizes to Mrs. Allen and Mrs. M'Lellan, for winners of the game. Mrs. John Miller Andrews and Miss Murphy kindly played the accompaniments. Mrs. Blake Odgers sent a wire of greetings to "Friends in Comber from a friend in London," which gave much pleasure. It was very unfortunate that an accident should happen to one of the three buses from Belfast on its homeward journey. We are glad indeed that the injuries received by some of our visiting members were not serious.

Mountpottinger.—The Annual Sale of Work took place on Friday, December 9th and was opened by Miss Margaret M'Vicker, of Ballarat, Australia, a former member of the Congregation, who has been spending an extended holiday in Ulster after fifteen years absence. The Chair was occupied by Rev. A. Whitford (Minister in charge). Miss M'Vicker said she was delighted to be present that day and to renew many old friendships. Under all circumstances the Sale which realised approximately £52 was deemed to have had satisfactory results. The local branch

of the Women's League has generously offered to defray the cost of a Hymn Board which will be made to harmonise with the Davidson Memorial Font now in course of preparation. Too late for insertion in our last issue, news reached us of the death in Australia of Mr. Horace Steel, who was for a number of years connected with the Church and Sunday School, being a regular member of the Choir. When the Ulster Divison was formed in the early stages of the War he volunteered as a member of the Ambulance Section for which he had qualifications. Unfortunately after a few months training he was discharged on health grounds and he never seemed to really recover. The departure to Australia some twelve months ago was preceded by voyages as a sea-going engineer but evidently the trouble was too deeply located to be eradicated and the end came a few weeks ago. To his bereaved relatives we tender our sympathy. The Pulpit was occupied on November 20th by Rev. J. A. Kelly, in the morning only, as the Ulster Hall Service claimed our attention in the evening. On November 27th, Rev. J. Begg (of Larne) preached in the morning, whilst in the evening Rev. C. W. Townsend did duty and had a large congregation. On December 4th, Rev. P. Godding officiated, and on the 11th, Mr. J. M'Cleery, who is at the moment our only Ulster Student for the Ministry, deputised for Rev. J. Bibby.

Holywood.—The Annual Meeting of the First Presbyterian (Non-Subscribing) Congregation was held after morning service on Sunday, December 18th. The chair was taken by Mr. W. Patterson, and there was a representative attendance. The chairman in moving the adoption of the Committee's report and the Treasurer's financial statement gave expression to the congregation's regret that Mr. W. H. Niall Nelson was resigning the position of Hon. Treasurer, which he had held for over fifteen years in succession to his father, the late Mr. Omar Nelson; but said they were glad to know that his resignation was not due to any decline in Mr. Nelson's interest in the church but to the fact that for the time, he was living away from Holywood, and thought it was better for them to have a Treasurer who was on the spot. Mr. Patterson also announced that Mr. Nelson had very generously given the sum of £28 16s. 4d., the amount of the deficit on the church account for the year, in order to allow his successor to start his first year of office with a clean sheet. The adoption of the report and financial statement was seconded by Mr. J. Meneely and carried. The Chairman then proposed, and Mr. C. Greenfield seconded, a resolution expressing the congregation's deep regret at Mr. Nelson's retirement from office after over fifteen years' faithful and much valued service and their grateful appreciation of his kind gift to wipe off the debit balance on the year's accounts. This was carried unanimously and with acclamation. On the motion of Mr. W. K. Graham, seconded by Mr. H. Shannon, jun., the Committee were re-elected with the addition of Miss Malcolm, Mrs. Robinson, Sir John Campbell, M.D., M.P., and Mr. Gawn Grainger. Mr. F. A. Robinson was appointed Hon. Treasurer, and Mr. J. Shannon, jun., was re-elected Hon. Secretary. Mr. F. A. Robinson was re-elected the congregation's representative on the Board of Governors of the Holywood Upper Sullivan School. Votes of thanks were accorded to the members of the Choir and the Chairman.

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